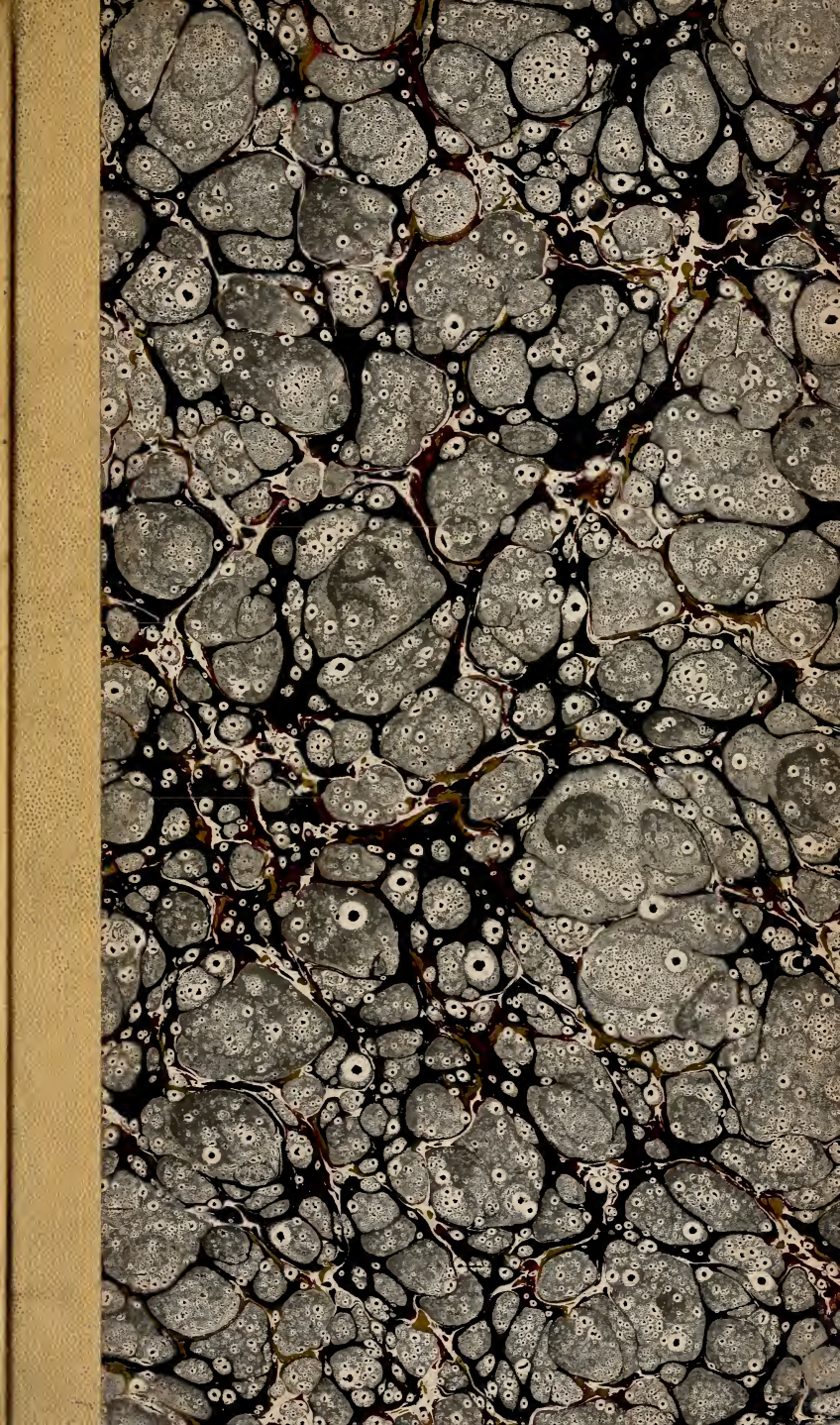




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THE PASTOR'S MEMORIAL.

THE
PASTOR'S MEMORIAL

OF

January 3, 1843.

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ESSEX STREET CHURCH.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY SAMUEL N. DICKINSON.

1843.

C

Miss Mary Adams Bush,
July 11, 1901.

PAID
JUL 11 1901
BY
JUL 11 1901

BOSTON, JANUARY 9, 1843.

REV. N. ADAMS,

Dear Sir:

WE respectfully request that you will permit us to have the sermon delivered by you yesterday morning printed for the use of the families of your congregation. In consequence of the unpleasant weather many were prevented from attending on that occasion, and are very desirous of the privilege of reading it. It will be exceedingly gratifying to us, if you will consent to our request, and we have no doubt it will serve to strengthen the bond of union which so happily exists among us at the present time.

Very affectionately your friends,

CHARLES SCUDDER,
WILLIAM LINCOLN,
SAMUEL F. PHELPS,
JOHN TAPPAN,
GEORGE W. THAYER,
JONATHAN D. STEELE,
JAMES P. THORNDIKE,
A. WILKINSON,
GEORGE H. DAVIS,
J. A. NEWELL,
A. KINGMAN,
GEORGE D. DUTTON,
GEORGE F. GUILD.



WITH a desire to contribute a memorial of a very interesting and to me ever memorable occasion, I have yielded to the request in the foregoing letter for the printing and private circulation of a sermon, which, though not suggested by the occasion alluded to in it, nor being one which the writer would ever have thought of having printed, may, in the spirit of the text, and in illustration of the sermon itself, be a "still small voice" of instruction, gratitude, and pleasant recollection.

N. A.

S E R M O N .

I. KINGS, XIX. 11, 12, 13.

And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord ; but the Lord was not in the wind . and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake :

And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire : and after the fire a still small voice.

And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.

THE strongest confidence in God may, through the infirmities of the best of men, fail them in times of heavy trial. We may wonder that Elijah, who had just brought fire from heaven by his prayers, should have feared the threats of Jezebel. It is our duty to avoid danger, and to use means of defence if it comes ; but Elijah added despondence and prayed for death. He fled into the wilderness, “ and as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, an angel touched him and said, Arise and eat. And he looked and behold there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink and

laid him down again.” “And the angel of the Lord came again the second time and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and he went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God.” The miracle no doubt revived his faith; it taught him that “they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” But God had still another lesson for him, and seems to have given him strength to reach Horeb, that, in the security and stillness of the desert hill, his spirit might be prepared for the heavenly message.

While Elijah was in the cave at Horeb, God came to him and said, “What doest thou here, Elijah! And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only am left, and they seek my life to take it away.” Under such circumstances, the life of Elijah was a struggle against treacherous friends; single handed, he maintained the honor of God against an apostate church; but at last, in despair of effecting an impression upon their minds, and being hunted for his life, he fled. Had there been even a few in Israel who had remained faithful among the faithless, he might hope that the truth would prevail; but they seemed to him

to be wholly given to idolatry, and they had chased away the messenger of God. Means had all failed, and what could he suppose but that God had himself abandoned Israel? A revival of the true religion was a desperate hope. He did not pray at *this* time however that God would take away his life, but in the recesses of his cavern, he yet needed to see how it was possible for a reformation to begin amongst a people who in his view had altogether become impious and vile.

The method by which the Most High instructed him, is an instance of infinite wisdom and condescension. God said to him, "Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord." As soon as this command was given, it would seem that a tempest arose, while Elijah was yet in the cave. The noise of the whirlwind, so far from encouraging Elijah to obey the command and go out, excited his fear; at least, there was no divine influence accompanying the whirlwind to draw him out from his retreat; and this is probably what is meant when it is said, "And the Lord was not in the wind." Elijah heard the tempest roar around the mountain; as the blast grew fierce, the splintered peaks were rent in pieces, and rolling down the mountain sides, sent up echoes from the precipice and depths below. The prophet did not feel that God had come. It might be the coming of his chariot wheels, as he rode on the cherub and the wings of the wind; but the prophet did not feel

that the Most High was expecting him as yet at the door of the cave. As the whirlwind sunk to rest, the earth shook; the mountain seemed to move from its old foundation. Surely God is there, and the pillars of the earth mourn! The prophet was still insensible to any impressions upon his spirit that God was there. Flames of fire succeeded the earthquake; the mountain seemed a whole burnt offering. But the prophet had as yet no impression upon his mind that God was waiting at the door of the cave for that interview to which He had commanded him. Had every other terrible manifestation of nature uttered itself around the cave, the prophet would probably have waited for some other indication that God was there. At length it came — but in what contrast to the whirlwind, the earthquake, the fire! — “and after the fire a still small voice.” It seemed as though some one was standing without; and yet there were no footsteps, no call, no impressive annunciation that the Holy One was enthroning himself on the hill top, in his clouds and darkness. But a still small voice was speaking; it was too low to make its words articulate, and yet it was sufficiently clear to be known as a voice; it was not like the wind, and earthquake, and fire — violent, impassioned; but was calm and quiet, as though it were making harmony with the gentlest zephyr; its low, quiet tone awakened in the prophet’s mind a feeling that there was more in it than in the furious elements, and that a mortal man

could never be speaking thus who had just witnessed such convulsions of nature. “And it was so when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.” He knew that the Most High had come, and that he must then obey the command and go forth and stand before the Lord.* But there was no call in the still small voice, telling him “this is the moment when you must step forth, this is the signal for the interview to begin.” He knew that God was there only by the effect which that still small voice had upon his heart. He knew that God was not ready for the interview with him during the storm, and the earthquake and the fire, because the effect of them was to repel him, and to go forth during the fury of those convulsions would have seemed to him like suicide. When that still small voice began to speak, the prophet feared. He who had stood undaunted and seen fire come down from heaven at his prayer and consume the idolatrous offerings, he whose nerves had not failed him as he slew the prophets of Baal, and saw their blood flow away in the brook till its waters far and near were red like crimson, stood in awe at that still small voice. Instead of going out boldly and with his usual courage,

* “As he was going towards the mouth of the cave, he was affrighted and stopped in his course, by the dreadful wind, earthquake, and fire : and when these were past, he prosecutes his journey and goes on to the mouth of the cave, and stands still.” — *Pool's Annotations*.

he must needs wrap his face in his mantle ; for that still small voice with its supernatural power showed that there might also be something to be seen, which would be more than his nature could bear. Neither would he go out under the open sky ; or look round him upon the solitary hill ; the voice was not of earth — and he was afraid to see God. He stood in the entering in of the cave, his face hidden in his mantle, and he waiting to hear what the Author of that voice which was louder in its stillness than the wind, and though small, mightier than earthquake and fire, would say to him.

The meaning and intention of this symbol is often misunderstood. We frequently hear it said as an argument against all excitement of feeling, and all vigorous and bold efforts even at proper times to do good, that God was not in the wind, or earthquake, or fire, but in the still, small voice ! and that, taught by this symbol on Horeb, we ought to be entirely quiet, and never think that any tide of feeling which rises above a certain ordinary mark can be any thing else than a threatening flood. Dangerous excitements are the offspring of erroneous principles and conduct ; but it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing. Excitement is of healthful tendency when the principles from which it springs are right. Our feelings are quickened into a safe and useful course by new and awakening events and motives ; the community is benefited by occurrences which rouse them to

strong feeling and action. God is sometimes in the wind and earthquake and fire; he does not confine himself to one mode of operation; the excitement which any thing occasions, therefore, is not a just and sufficient reason for condemning it; we must look at the principles which are taught by it, to know whether it is good or bad. The scene on Horeb, therefore, was not intended to teach the prophet that nothing should ever be done except in a calm and quiet way. Was not God in the fire that came down on Baal's altars, and confounded his priests? Was not the Lord in that wind that blew back the waters of the Red sea to overwhelm Pharaoh and his hosts? Was not God in that earthquake at Sinai when the Law was given? Ps. 68: 8.

But there was a great and most useful meaning and intention in that scene on Horeb. Elijah was in despair at the revival of religion. He saw no way by which Israel could be recovered to the worship of the true God. He had fled to the wilderness, and under the desert tree he prayed for death. God led him on to Horeb, that in the solitude of its cave he might teach him a lesson which he should ever remember. The lesson was this: *God has access to the soul of man in a way and with a power wholly independent of external force.* The fire from heaven on Baal's altar did not convert Ahab and Jezebel. So far from it, Jezebel was provoked at the triumph of Elijah in the name of God over the false prophets,

and she sent word to him saying, "So let the gods do to me and more also if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." Well might he argue, 'if such a miracle as fire from heaven, in answer to my prayer, does not turn the heart of the queen, there is no hope from miracles — there is no strength in outward means, of themselves, to change the heart.' God wished to impress this truth more deeply upon him, while at the same time he showed him that his arm was not shortened that it could not save, but that he had a power mightier than all the emblems of power in nature or providence. How did he teach him this lesson? In the most direct way to work abiding conviction in him, viz : by making experiment upon the prophet's own feelings. You think, bold prophet of the Most High, that the furious elements, the fire from heaven, the visible manifestations of God's wrath, and the ministers of his omnipotence in nature, are the most powerful methods of turning the heart of man. You shall see in your own experience that it is not so. In the recesses of your cave, God calls you to an interview with the dread Sovereign of the world; but hark! the tempest is on the wing; the storm is up, the rocks rend, as though the final hour had come. Will you go forth now and meet God? He shrinks back with fear—it seems like going to his doom. He cannot feel that God is there; the storm makes no impression upon him but that of alarm. The

earth quakes ; lo ! the footsteps of a present God ! God is not in the earthquake to the prophet's heart ; the fire as it blazes, and flashes into his cave, only leaves the darkness which is on his soul more terrific than before. But when, if not at such signs of God's presence, will the prophet obey the summons to stand forth and speak with God ? At last his soul is stirred within him, he knows not why, by that mysterious voice ; his great spirit moves at the low and gentle sound ; he cannot stay in his cave ; he knows, he feels that God has come ; and while he could look undaunted upon the flashes of the fire, he hides his face in his mantle at the still small voice. Then the inference which he drew, and which no doubt remained with him as one of those results of experience which are never forgotten, was, God has a way of reaching the heart independently of outward force. There is a still small voice of God in the soul which the soul will hear and obey, when winds and earthquakes and fires have tried in vain to turn it to God.

This sublime and yet pathetic lesson of the Most High to the prophet, is of useful application. Indeed we often find it illustrated in our experience and observation.

We have seen men visited by the severest afflictions, without any apparent religious effect. They have lost children, their property, and their health, and the use of their limbs, and every thing has had vanity written upon it ; every thing has admonished them

to set their affections on things above. But they have been unmoved by all these alarms and judgments. God was not, in these cases and to them, in the wind and the earthquake and the fire. But, perhaps, one night as they lay upon their sleepless pillow and without knowing any cause why sleep should depart from them, a distant clock has struck the hour of midnight, and straightway thoughts of death and eternity have been fastened on them, which have led them to God.

A man pursuing a course of iniquity to the injury of others, has strengthened himself against every remonstrance, and his friends have expected that some judgment of heaven would overtake him. He takes his axe and goes into the woods to fell his trees; and while looking at a tree and preparing to cut it down, the thought strikes his mind that he is like that devoted tree, and that it would be just in God to cut him down. On his return, his friends perceive that that change has taken place in him which they may have supposed nothing but the bitterest cup of God's wrath in this world would bring to pass.

Some men have heard the Gospel preached for many years under the most favorable circumstances, but nothing has prevailed for their conversion. At particular times, sermons have been preached which their friends thought must have been written with a knowledge of those cases, and they looked for the

immediate effect of them in the conversion of their friends; but in vain. When, however, it was least expected, these friends have gone to public worship with serious inclinations, though undefined, and as the congregation rose for prayer, a solemn awe has come upon the mind, and the thought of standing in the presence of God, has, for the first time, made impressions upon the heart, which have been the beginning of the work of the Spirit.

A little child has asked an ungodly parent why he cursed God, and the child's question has had a power which the rebukes of a whole neighborhood and of the pulpit never carried with them. A child has asked a prayerless father why he did not kneel with it in secret as the mother did; and immediately it is said of that father what many had despaired of ever being able to say, "Behold he prayeth."

In every thing we see illustrations of the fact that the simplest and most quiet and gentle things often have irresistible influence over the heart. In looking at a common flower which you may have carelessly gathered at the road side, or in the fields, you may have had impressions of the wisdom and benevolence of God, stronger than you ever received from sermons or lectures. A man is looking at the buds on a vine in spring; the signs of returning vegetation in the earth indicated by the bursting folds of the bud, make him feel the possibility of the resurrection of

the dead, which before he had never had so forcibly presented to his thoughts.

When you have been discouraged and depressed, you have had a load raised from your heart by some kind and cheering expression, or by the mere look and tone of interest and sympathetic feeling.

Even in our greatest enjoyments, in the most prominent events of life, some little incident will have more power to move the feelings and excite happiness than other things of more intrinsic importance. A pastor is cheered and made happy by a spontaneous expression of his people's best wishes for his usefulness and welfare. They whom he has long been accustomed to meet in the sanctuary, those familiar faces which are associated in his mind with his public ministrations, behold, of their own accord they fill his dwelling. Their presence creates a pleasing illusion before his mind, mingling the associations of the sanctuary of God with the sanctuary of his own home, so that like Jacob under the spell of his dream, he almost says, as he stands in his house and looks upon the throng and sees them pouring their oil upon his rock, "*This* is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." But what is it, amongst the numerous pledges of their regard, that touches the deepest chords of his soul? The stranger, the dispassionate, disinterested stranger, points to the beauty, the taste, the value of one thing after another. But the pastor, not insensible to

these things, finds his eye resting on something which may have been bought with "two mites," and which for that reason is in his view of priceless worth. In that gift, stranger, he hears "a voice you cannot hear." As the whole scene comes back upon his memory, what part of it stands out with prominence, what incident involuntarily presents itself to his thoughts? Perhaps it is a little child putting into his hand the words of a simple benediction, dictated by her own heart, and wrought by her own fingers, "God bless you!" As time passes on, and the numerous incidents of the occasion blend like the several flames of a receding light-house into a cheering star upon the ocean, what still small voice is that which follows him on his voyage, and never ceases to affect his heart? It is the voice of a few other letters of more than magic spell, "I love you." They are wrought on a simple mark for his book; the hand that made them and gave them is happily unknown, and thereby imagination attributes them to every individual in turn, and loves to place them under the name of the Congregation as the blended meaning of their thoughts and words, and as the echo of the departing scene.

Nothing that we say or do, however inconsiderable it may seem to us, is unimportant. Every word and act of man before others makes impressions upon them; the slightest look, or word, or deed, may be fraught with power to wound or heal. It is not neces-

sary that we should bestow a fortune on a man to make him happy, or that we should bruise him or defame him to break his heart. A smile, a word, a trifling act of kindness, is often like the first trace of blue sky to a storm-tossed mariner; a frown, a short answer, a cold repulse, ever so slight, may be like the minute barb which makes the arrow rankle in the wound. Our most impressive actions are those which are almost involuntary, which leap from us before consideration and courtesy can shape them into the exact propriety which we would study to give them. These are the things which show the state of the heart; they are the glances which we have of the soul through the window before it opens the door to us. Nothing can regulate the still small voice of our involuntary appearance and conduct, but a heart filled with benevolence towards man, and habitually cherishing thoughts of kindness, and repressing every evil feeling, considering the example of him who made even the vilest but penitent sinners feel, by his looks and actions, that in him they would find a merciful friend. It is easier to do good, to make others happy, than we are apt to consider, and this makes us inexcusable in not doing good, and increases our obligations to bless others. It is easier to do injury than we are apt to think, and this should make us keep the heart "with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

But this is only incidental to the main truth in view

in this discourse. We are taught by it that we ought never to despair of the power of God to reach the heart of the most apparently hardened and hopeless sinner.

It was to impress Elijah with this truth that the scene at Horeb took place. It gives us adoring thoughts of the wisdom and condescension of God in making use of this expedient to teach and encourage the desponding Prophet. How kind in God to regard the infirmities of his servant, to send that angel to him when retreating from the battle with the enemies of God, and casting himself down under a desert tree and praying that he may die! How kind that act of heavenly care in preparing food for him, and bringing him a cruse of water, to strengthen him after his rest, and the second time awaking him to eat, because the journey would be too great for him! Let us not think, though the age of miracles is past, that the age of God's good providence is a past dispensation! "His mercy endureth forever." He leads the Prophet away to meditation and prayer—and on the lone mountain teaches him by the prophet's own experience that God's word and ordinances may be despised, his altars violated, his prophets destroyed, his judgments set at nought—and yet that he has secret access to the human soul in a way that the soul cannot resist. If you have a friend, a child, a companion who has thus far frustrated all the means of grace, and you have almost ceased to hope that the ordi-

nances of the Gospel will affect him, think, that if God should whisper one word to his heart, or bring some simple object to his eye, or some still small voice to his ear, he would hide his face, and come forth from that cave from which whirlwinds and earthquakes and fire have not been able to bring him. What a slave our faith becomes to outward means! We must use them, and we must look for God's blessing in the use of them;—but we are too apt to serve them and do obeisance to them; we watch their influence, and rely upon having all the circumstances of them perfectly adjusted, instead of thinking mostly of God in them. It is affecting to think of the infinite ease with which God has access to the human soul, and “turns it as the rivers of water are turned.” In view of this fact ought we ever to despair of a living sinner? We ought to strengthen ourselves in the Lord, and honor him. God has often led us, as it were, to Horeb, and repeated to our experience what he taught the Prophet; and we have sung his praise, and forgot his works. We have known many a stout heart bowed in contrition by the simplest means, and almost without external means, when every well arranged effort for his salvation had utterly failed. Let us think more of God's still small voice to the conscience and the heart, and if we desire the salvation of others, remember that God, who has hitherto spoken to them in his word and ordinances, in vain, has but to

breathe with the spirit of his efficient grace around the bolted door of their hearts, and their spirits will own and adore the present God.

There is one obvious conclusion in view of our text and subject. Our greatest hope of God's grace in the conversion of our friends and for every good work is in prayerful dependence upon Him. Our prayer should be more confiding; a calm, deep, cheerful and yet an earnest appeal to His almighty power.

The spirit of our prayer should be such that we cannot murmur and grow impatient, or weary, but gather strength at the divine delays by reflecting upon the power of God. Perhaps we often err in the very importunity and perseverance of our prayers, by not having confidence enough in God; and then he leaves us almost on the borders of distraction at his delay, because we have not sanctified him by a cheerful confidence in his almighty power. Importunity is not fretfulness, nor self-inflicted tortures; prayer prevails more by the importunity which grows out of confidence and is sustained by it, than by sorrowful and despairing cries. God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Let us honor him by our confidence, and he may exceed our thoughts and prayers.

Some of you, perhaps, have long wished for peace with God in the christian's experience and hope. So much has been said to you, so many books, and providences, and seasons of special religious interest

have conspired in vain for your conversion, that you are almost in despair of ever hearing any thing or meeting with any thing which can affect you. In a desponding, if not a reckless, state of mind, you are passing on to your last account. It seems to you as though God had exhausted his patience if not his power, in his endeavors to change your heart. But you "are not straitened in God." He can suggest a thought, he can excite a feeling in your heart, which in its stillness can affect you as no external means have ever done. If you feel your need of his grace, do not look away from him to his ordinances, nor to his ministers; but go to him with that faith in his power and grace with which the blind men and the lepers applied to the Saviour. All that preaching or books or christian advice can do for you, is to direct you to God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." Can you suppose that your mind and heart and will are beyond the reach of the finger of God? "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" Go in your thoughts with Elijah under his desert tree, go with him to the cave of Horeb, and there learn that the goodness, and the grace, and the power of God, are higher than your thoughts, and greater than your sins.



